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000 The dualisms and pluralities of Southeast Asia society are relatively modern, becoming emphatic only over the past three hundred years, but plural societies and changing values within the units have been apparent in their changing political patterns. First there were the inland political nuclei; the kingdoms of Middle Burma, Upper Siam, Inner Cambodia were matched among the islands by principalities set in the mountains of Sumatra and Java. Then came the little powers related more to the sea than to the land; the Sailendra kingdoms using the Malacca Strait as their bond and artery, the Majapahit sea kingdom whose territories in Borneo, Celebes, Java and South Sumatra may be thought of as footholds for a sailing people, fringing rather than entrenched in the islands (Fig. 113). At a later phase the move of power centres was to the lower rivers of the continental edge, to Lower Burma and Lower Siam. In these historic patterns of political units may be seen operating the influences and traditions of widely differing human types, one rooted in the land, coming overland, depending on agriculture for its welfare and power; the other of seafaring people, many kinds and grades of them, coming to the lands of Southeast Asia by water, relatively mobile on their seaways, fishing and trading through the seas, and always peripheral to the land.

Dual National Foci

369 In most of the constituent political units of Southeast Asia there
184 is thus a split of interest (Fig. 117). Burma has a focus at Mandalay
177 and a commercial-administrative focus at Rangoon; the Philippines
631 has a dual nodality round Manila and round the Visayan Islands; Malaya, which has only recently acquired clear internal focus, has two centres of different interest, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore, the former exclusively peninsular, the latter as much involved with all Southeast Asia as with Malaya; Indochina has the double pull of the Tonkin (Hanoi) area and the Mekong Delta (Saigon); Java, its old internal focus at Jogjakarta, with Batavia acting as external point of attraction. Sumatra is in the strange position of having several inland nuclei plus the tendency to use Singapore as its outport and route to Batavia. Only Siam can claim to have no second focus, yet even there the channelling toward Bangkok is only natural for the Chao Praya Basin; the Korat Plateau topography leads human and commercial interests towards the Mekong and the border country towards the northwest was once focused on

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the historic kingdoms at Chiengmai. Borneo is laid out so far entirely under centrifugal influences, complicated by the split into British and Dutch zonations.

If this "balkanisation" be true of the individual political units, it is equally strong in the region as a whole, except that the intersection of major seaways and airways tends to make an internal regional focus on Singapore, a tendency diminished by India's economic pull on Burma and South China's pull on the people, trade and foods of Siam and Indochina.

To some extent these dual foci to each territory have been stimulated by the arrival of Western trading systems which pulled in one direction while the traditional interests pull in another, yet in a sense all these political units have been created by colonial powers administering as a unit territories not previously politically unified or previously using the present boundaries. Spain and the United States enforced unity upon what is now the Philippines and in practice had continued difficulty in keeping Mindanao, for example, within the unit. France has imposed a uniformity and a certain coherence upon Indochina which was novel to the constituent units. Malaya as it exists today is a British political creation. Before the Dutch colonial period of the present century, all the islands of the East Indies had never been controlled as one whole.

Environment and States

The continental political units, Burma, Siam and Indochina in some ways may be likened to little Egypts—nucleations of people within attractive, fertile valleys protected in these cases by the nearly empty space of forests and mountains. The combination of natural encouragement and natural protection conditioned major civilisations in Egypt and in Mesopotamia at one phase in history and appears to be equally encouraging in this tropical setting except for one difference, that although this environment on the southeastern fringe of Asia certainly suited the growth of states, its protective isolation was incomplete. In the north the growing riverine states were exposed to intruders. Thus in these riverside nurseries, states were environmentally encouraged to grow in a setting attractive as breeding grounds for nations, though the environment was not sufficiently isolating nor sufficiently protective to enable the nascent states to persist. So far as the main islands were concerned, on our maps they appear as more emphatic units

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than their elongated forms, difficult interiors and cliffed, marsh or forest edges in fact justify. Rarely has any one of the major islands been the locale of a single people singly governed, homogeneous and integrated into an island-state. These large islands have been dispersive and fragmentive to the peoples in them.

Postwar Nationalism

The postwar effusion of nationalism in Southeast Asia is thus a paradox. It is a nationalism of plural societies and substantial minorities, without homogeneity inside the states, and without a nation, as understood in Europe, and very much a culmination of the insecurity and uncertainty produced by the divergent influences which have long been at work, breaking down old social integrations and their warm, human associations, substituting for them nothing but commerce and the new myth "economic man," cold, inexorable and not adequately or fully integrated with Southeast Asia people and their setting.

The devolution of Southeast Asia from colonial into nationalist units takes place at no propitious time. The cultivation of rice has been predatory, the accumulated effects of which are now showing in diminishing yields; new paddylands before the war were ceasing to be so easily available and the war threw a large proportion of the old lands out of cultivation. Rubber has found a competitor in synthetic rubber, and its production may repeat the history of sugar. Tin recovers from the war slowly because equipment has been lost. Plantation crops have lost labour, markets and opportunities. Yet Southeast Asia is still increasing its people faster than the world average. Its increase, however, has gone on at a slower rate in the already congested areas and at a faster rate in what had been the emptier areas of South Sumatra (with Javanese migrants), in Mindanao (with Filipinos), in Johore (by Chinese immigrants), as well as in Laos, Dutch Borneo and Inner Siam, by local increases. Thus Southeast Asia has been filling up, though there is little prospect yet of an even distribution.

Devolution

The Southeast Asia population is expanding now as the trade systems which provided its first impetus to expansion shrink and lose coherence. The atmosphere is one of relinquishing colonies, but under circumstances when they are involved in an international

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642 [liberal] conventional practice, an ambition to obtain greater influence within the Realm on affairs of the Realm as a whole'.[1] In Burma the constitution formally embodies those rights that the Javanese demand, but, because the form has no substance in political realities, it is a source of discontent rather than of satisfaction, and the people make still further demands.

631 As regards self-government in local affairs, urban administration in Java is in many ways a model of efficiency, contrasting very favourably with municipal administration in Burma. But it is largely run by Europeans for Europeans and, in the provision of amenities such as houses for the people, it aims at European standards. The Regency Councils, corresponding roughly to District Councils in Burma, seem to reflect in great measure the personality of the Regent, but one does not hear the charges of gross inefficiency and corruption, ordinarily levied against western institutions of local self-government in Burma.

Western self-government however hardly touches the mass of the people, either in Burma or Java. These live in villages. In Burma western self-government has been constructed, in accordance with western ideas, on the basis of individual rights. The Dutch system was built up on the basis of the village, and aimed to bring the village into organic relation with higher units of popular self-government. But the preponderance of local officials among those elected suggests general indifference, due perhaps to the device of indirect election. Yet in Burma we find a similar indifference, and the lack of any local ties between members and their constituencies has often been deplored; politicians can easily secure votes by appealing to the natural dislike of foreign rule, but they know and care little for their constituencies, and the villagers know and care little about what happens in the legislature.

In Burma as in Java local interest does not extend beyond local affairs, but there is a striking difference between them in village administration. In Java the Dutch have tried to conserve both the form and content of traditional self-government while adapting it to the requirements of the modern world; in Burma a contrary policy has been pursued. In Java the intricate complexity of the native political organization has been simplified, but the regency and village have been retained. In Burma the organic unit, the circle, has been replaced by the purely official township, and the country has been broken up into villages, while there is no organ of oriental

[1] Hart, p. 29.

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democracy corresponding to the *vergadering* of Java. In Burma the village has become merely an administrative unit, whereas in Java the village still appears to be mainly a social unit. And it would hardly be possible to find a more striking contrast than between the Village Act of Java, designed as an instrument of social uplift, and the Village Act of Burma, designed as an instrument of law and order and 'vigorously enforced' by fines on villages, villagers and headmen. Government schemes in Java, we are told, 'risk failure if they appeal to the individual economic instincts and have a fair chance of being comprehended and accepted, if they are based on a foundation of organic co-operation'.[1]

Indebtedness. Both in Burma and Java agricultural indebtedness has accompanied, and has indeed been a condition of, economic progress. It was through giving out advances that the planter in Java secured his land and labour, and that the miller in Burma made certain of getting an adequate supply of paddy at the lowest possible rate. The Dutch, with their State pawnshops and People's Banks, have done more than has been attempted in Burma to provide credit on sound lines, but they have by no means solved the problem of indebtedness; alongside the state institutions the private moneylender still flourishes. But the application of native customary law to land, and the prohibition against the alienation of land to foreigners have obviated the most pernicious social and political consequences of agricultural indebtedness, and it is not in the same measure as in Burma a cause of agricultural distress and political ill-will.

Litigation and Crime. Until quite recently litigation was as unusual in Burma as it still is in Java. But in Burma the people have been encouraged to settle their disputes by the processes of western law; whereas in Java, customary law and the practice of arbitration and the settlement of disputes by reasonable compromise have survived.

An even greater contrast is presented in respect of crime. In Java the death sentence is almost unknown; for the five years from 1935 to 1939, with a population for the whole of Netherlands India of nearly 70 million, only three persons were sentenced to death; in Burma, with a fifth of the population, the death sentence is passed on some two hundred a year and upwards of a hundred a year are hanged. It is difficult to compare sentences of imprisonment, but the position in Java is very different from that in Burma where, for some thirty years, the accommodation for convicts has failed to keep pace with

[1] Hart, p. 65.

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theme of complaint. But in India and other tropical dependencies, they form the framework of a huge western superstructure over native life, wholly foreign to the people. Not only is there less self-government, but less government than before, because the machinery is too vast and complex to be informed by human will.

The multiplication of native officials is, therefore, no measure of the progress of self-government, but rather the reverse. In Europe the public services provide what the people want, and a comparatively small staff suffices to give them what they want; but in the tropics the much larger staff necessary to obtain the compliance of the people with innovations that they do not want constitutes a hindrance to self-government.

The inverse relation between self-government and the multiplication of native officials is illustrated by the system of indirect rule. Under this system there is a much greater measure of self-government than under direct rule, and one of its advantages is that it does not require so large a staff. During the nineteenth century in Java, when the Regents and villages managed their own affairs, few officials were employed. But, with economic progress, and the influx of foreign elements, there is a demand for the introduction of western law and western amenities, and accordingly far more judges and magistrates and the multiplication of special services. Thus, as native officials become more numerous, native self-government decays. On the other hand, as happened in Siam, an independent country can employ a large number of European officials without ceasing to be self-governing. So long as the Government remains an instrument of foreign rule, the increasing association of natives in every branch of tropical administration is no index to the progress of self-government.

II. Machinery: Local Government

Together with the increasing association of natives in the administration, Liberals placed their faith in the 'gradual development of self-governing institutions'. Local self-government is, of course, no new thing in the tropics. From very early times tropical rulers have allowed foreign traders in the ports to settle their own affairs in their own way according to their own laws. It was in accordance with this principle of 'like over like' that Europeans in India and other parts of the tropics were allowed, and required, to maintain order among their own community. But modern self-government on a western pattern is the child of sanitation. It was owing to trouble over town conservancy

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631 that, in 1687, the East India Company obtained from James II a charter constituting a new civil government for Madras on an English model with a mayor, aldermen and burgesses empowered to levy taxes for such matters as seemed 'convenient for the honour, interest, ornaments, security and defence' of the corporation and inhabitants; their powers included the constitution of a court for the trial of both civil and criminal issues.[1] Similar corporations were subsequently established in the other Presidency towns, but the extension of municipal administration to the interior is comparatively recent.

Local self-government in the interior had its origin, as in the city of Madras, in the urgent need to find some more efficient way of dealing with the problem of sanitation. But the situation was very different. In Madras an effective majority of the chief inhabitants wanted better conservancy, and of their own motion they obtained a charter so that they might better be able to do what they wanted to have done. In the interior it was the local officials and not the people who wanted better sanitation. So long as nothing could be done without the sanction of the central Government in India or Europe, local officials could not help themselves; some measure of deconcentration of authority was needed to invest them with the requisite powers and to enable them to raise the necessary funds.[2] Municipal administration provided the machinery. In Madras, as in Europe, western self-governing institutions enabled the townsfolk, or the dominant class among them, to do what they wanted; in the interior Government could provide the machinery of local self-government, but the people did not want to use it.

The outcome of the first essay in municipal legislation was ominous. In 1842 an Act for Bengal enabled 'the inhabitants of any place of public resort or residence to make better provision for purposes connected with health or convenience'. But so far were the people from wanting better provision that in the first town to which it was applied they prosecuted the collector for trespass. This killed the Act, and little more was attempted until the Report of the Royal Army Sanitary Commission in 1863 attributed the bad health of the troops largely to the insanitary condition of the towns. This report may be taken to mark the beginning of both modern sanitation and modern local self-government in India. During the next five years the various Provinces were equipped with municipal legislation. But even so far as the people wanted better sanitation, they did not want, and could not

[1] *IG*, IV, 284. [2] *ISC*, I, 301.

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use, western municipal machinery. We have noticed that in Burma the townsfolk were beginning to adapt their social life to the new environment, and could make their own arrangements for conservancy without western machinery or help from Government. In Madras, also, there were voluntary associations in some towns for sanitation and other social ends. Modern sanitation was *needed*, and in some degree was *wanted*; a social demand for sanitation was emerging. This might have served as the basis for a gradual organic development, but it seemed easier and quicker to turn out western municipal machinery by mass production. Yet the western machinery did not meet the emerging social demand, and, because it answered no demand, it was inefficient in providing for the need. The Acts of 1864 to 1868 did something to improve urban sanitation, but they marked little progress towards self-government. In 1870 the Provinces were for the first time given some control over their own revenues and were allowed to raise taxes if the fixed grant from central revenues did not suffice. The Resolution of 1870, introducing this new system, emphasized the importance of engaging local interest in the management of funds allotted to education, sanitation, medical charity and local works, and between 1871 and 1874 a new set of Municipal Acts provided for popular representation on local bodies. Only in the Central Provinces, one of the most backward territories, was popular representation regarded as successful; possibly because the people were too backward to question the wisdom and authority of the executive officers who presided over the committees.

So far, despite Liberal aspirations, efficiency had been the main theme and object of local self-government, and local organs had been provided in the towns, where better sanitation was urgently needed in the new environment consequent on economic progress. But in 1881 the Liberal Viceroy, Lord Ripon, struck a new note by emphasizing the value of local self-government as a means of political and popular education. Accordingly, in 1883–4, for the third time within twenty years, all the provinces were fitted out with new Municipal Acts.[1] These purported to introduce a more democratic principle. Former legislation had enabled the Government to get the people to do what it thought necessary; now the people were given powers to do, of their own accord, what Government thought necessary.

That was not the only reason for the inefficiency of local self-government. There was very little that, taken as a whole, the people did

[1] *IG*, IV, 164, 286, 287.

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631 want. Even in India, with a comparatively homogeneous population, 'the violent sectional antagonism between Hindus and Mohammedans, or Brahmins and non-Brahmins has certainly impaired the efficiency of local bodies'. In other tropical dependencies, with a more strongly plural character, self-government on western lines is impossible because, as we have noticed in Burma with its mixed population of Burmans, Indians and Chinese, and in the larger towns Europeans, the people lack 'the sense of common citizenship which the necessary basis for healthy civic life'. It is not only in Burma that the various communities have little common interest except in resisting proposals for enhanced taxation, or that the membership of local bodies largely consists of men who seek official favour or hope to line their pockets. In India the Statutory Commission noticed 'a number of cases of corruption and certain instances where very large sums had been expended in order to obtain seats on local government authorities, suggesting that those who expended such large amounts expected to be able to recoup themselves from illicit gains'.[1]

Most of the functions imposed on local bodies were things that needed doing, and the local bodies helped to get them done. If the inhabitants will not or cannot make the necessary adjustments for themselves, others must perform the task. Ordinarily it has devolved on the local official in charge of general administration. The forms of local self-government help him to discharge his functions more effectively by providing him with funds and by bringing him closer to the people. But form does not give rise to function. He was merely 'carrying out the will of his official superiors. He was just as much the eyes, ears and arms of the provincial Government as when functioning as revenue officer or district magistrate. Local self-government was just one of his many activities.' In India, forty years after the introduction of the forms of self-government through the Liberal enthusiasm of Lord Ripon, it was reported that 'the custom of the country, force of habit, apathy, and lack of desire to assume responsibility among those elected—together with the natural reluctance of an overworked official, desirous of efficiency, to consume much time in getting things done badly which he felt he could himself do well—combined to prevent real and substantial progress being made in political and popular education in the art of self-government'.[2] The view current among officials was that 'certainly Indians of the political class have not shone greatly in the

[1] *ISC*, I, 314.

[2] *ISC*, I, 301.

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sphere of local self-government during the last thirty years, although of course they blame everything but themselves'. With wider powers 'many will weary and again blame anything rather than their own lack of perseverance'.[1] These remarks suggest that Indians were not alone in looking beyond themselves to find a scapegoat for the failure of self-government, and they are illuminating as to its effect on causing friction between officials and the people. But such recriminations serve merely to divert attention from the real cause of its failure.

Under indirect rule local self-government follows a like course. With the growth of a western element in social life, it becomes necessary to replace native self-government by western self-governing machinery. In Netherlands India urban self-government on western lines was first introduced under the Decentralization Law of 1903. This was intended to promote efficiency by deconcentrating administrative activity, and also to provide an element of popular co-operation in the task of government. In the large towns self-government proved efficient, partly because it was based on the Dutch rather than the English model with an official *burgomaster* instead of a non-official as Chairman, but chiefly because the large towns contain a stronger European community than in British India, and in effect self-government was government by the European section. Elsewhere, however, it had a different result, and promoted executive efficiency rather than self-government.

Economic progress requires a readjustment of social life to new conditions, most rapidly and urgently in the towns, less obviously but no less inevitably in the villages. Under Lord Ripon the forms of western self-governing machinery were applied to rural areas. Here they were even more unreal than in the towns. For some towns did at least possess economic unity, whereas the districts and their subdivisions were merely artificial units devised for administrative convenience and with no organic cohesion. The natural effect was to expedite the decay of organic self-government in the villages. Under indirect rule, also, the readjustment of social conditions in rural areas comes, if less rapidly than under direct rule, to demand attention. In Netherlands India the Village Act of 1906 was intended to provide western machinery for consolidating village life, and for lifting the community to a higher level. But 'autonomy and progress do not go together', and after twenty years 'precious little autonomy remained', and the western machinery, having no organic relation to

[1] Curtis, p. 33.

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native life, ceased to function as soon as the hand of Government was withdrawn. Similarly, in British territories under indirect rule,

'the varied responsibilities now placed on native authorities demand the exercise of close and continuous supervision by the administration.... Many observers have questioned whether the traditional native authorities, or at all events a large number of the weaker units, will not be strained beyond their powers by the tasks now laid on them. Everywhere the supervision now exercised over them must bring home to the people that the sanction for their authority is no longer the good will of their own people, but the recognition accorded to them by the administration.'[1]

And under indirect rule, as under direct rule, native social units are continually readjusted and are often amalgamated for the sake of convenience or economy into large artificial administrative units with no traditional sanction, in which administrative methods can be applied according to a standard plan. Under Dutch rule as under British rule, and under direct rule as under indirect rule, local self-government fights a losing battle against efficiency.

12. Machinery: Central Government

In the machinery of the central government in tropical dependencies, one can trace a similar conflict between the contrary ideals of efficiency and autonomy. From very early days both the British and Dutch East India Companies furnished their representatives in the East with the assistance of a council. In British India, under the rule of law during the nineteenth century, this council took on a new character. From 1833 the Council of the Governor-General was gradually enlarged for the purpose of legislation, and in 1861 the Indian Councils Act provided for the addition to the Central Legislative Councils of non-officials, including Indians, and also for the constitution of Provincial Councils on similar lines. But these councils were merely 'committees by means of which the executive Government obtained advice and assistance in their legislation, and the public derived the advantage of publicity at every stage of the law-making process'.[2] Gradually the councils came to exercise an increasing influence over the conduct of affairs, and there was a growing deference to the opinions of important classes. This became more marked when the Indian Councils Act of 1892 enlarged the Provincial Councils and gave partial recognition to

[1] *African Survey*, pp. 538–9; Field, M. J., *Man*, 1943, p. 90.
[2] *ISC*, I, 114–16.

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Bangkok

On the other hand, changes in transportation have elevated Bangkok to a new importance. It lies astride the main air route between Europe and the Far East, and the Australia-Europe services also pass through it. It is now the leading international air center in Southeast Asia, with 42 international departures a week in 1953 as compared with Singapore's 27, and its airport is one of the larger commercial fields in the Orient.

The role of the Southeast Asian great city has been modified by the Pacific war and the granting of independence to Burma, the Philippines, and Indonesia, and partial independence to Vietnam. Five of the six great cities are now capitals of the independent states. Each of these merits the title "link capital"; that is, they are the media through which the newly independent states are linked with the outside world. At the same time, they have begun to assume an increasingly indigenous character. The substitution of Malay for Dutch names and street signs in Indonesia is only one evidence of cultural change. The in-migration of petty officials, tradesmen, and refugees from the beleaguered rural areas has given the urban populations a new and more homogeneous native cast. The fevers of nationalism have made the large minorities more cautious about flaunting their ethnic independence.

[i.e. as compared to the inconvenient port facilities -- Analyst]

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361 On the other hand, the war also brought in-
178 creased American influence into the region,
631 and the ubiquitous Coca-Cola sign is one of
184 the symbols of change that sooner or later
162 will be followed by changes in urban facili-
563 ties and urban organization.
171 More important, the present period is as-
369 sociated with an increasing intensification of the economic activities of government and a corresponding diminution of foreign enterprise. Political and administrative functions have become increasingly important since the war. Since the main governmental organs are concentrated in the largest centers, the direct influence of the great city upon the country in which it is primate is likewise increasing. Relations between nationalized city and an increasingly money-oriented countryside are becoming more intimate, and the formerly clear-cut cultural distinctiveness of city and country is rapidly becoming blurred. Therefore, the likelihood of the great city's leading a revival of ancient value systems, as some extreme ethnocentrists hope it will, is small. Only one prediction can be made: the days of the culturally alien and ethnically distinct urban center are numbered in Southeast Asia; and a city like Singapore becomes increasingly an anomalous relict of an age now past.

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